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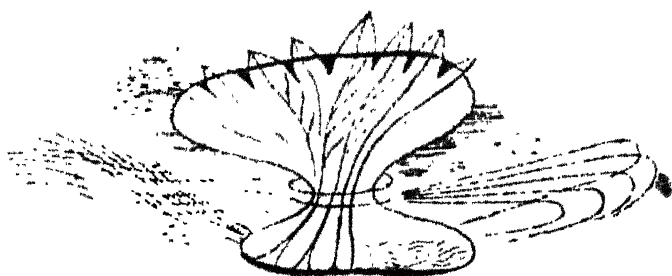


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THE BEST POEMS OF 1941



The
BEST POEMS
of 1941

Selected by
THOMAS MOULT

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To
THE MEMORY
of
F. R. HIGGINS
JAMES JOYCE
S. R. LYSAGHT
MAX PLOWMAN
LORD RENNELL OF RODD

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Introduction

SO much prose has been written on the war that if poetry takes a turn now and then it cannot be regarded as an intrusion. The poets have their own way of writing about the tragedy which, since the *Best Poems of 1940* appeared, has become universal. That the poets' way is different must be accepted: it is a unique way, illuminating the human spirit in its reaction to the European havoc instead of documenting actualities and pursuing theories. Indeed, as the years go on and order is restored to the world, out of the chaotic literature now being heaped up stupendously it is the poetry that will stand a better chance of survival than almost anything except the plain records. It has to be emphasised, though, that the work of poets likely to survive is to be described as poetry written in war-time, not war poetry, that was long since outmoded.

It is twenty years since the *Best Poems* series of annual volumes was inaugurated, and in all that time, through the inclusion of English-speaking authors on both sides the Atlantic, the link between America and Britain in literature has, to state it modestly, been kept bright. Thus the present endeavour by the leaders of thought to establish a closer political and economic union of the two great western commonwealths had for a prelude the already united poets' contribution. A century ago Shelley declared poets to be 'the unacknowledged legislators of the world.'

The fact that English and American poets — those of Britain, Ireland, and Canada as well as of the U.S.A. — share in the usual proportions the work that is gathered into the following pages indicates a

triumph over adverse conditions. At present our import and export of printed words, no less than that of other commodities, is dependent on the freedom of the Atlantic: and with the help of the friends of poetry in each country the inevitable difficulties have been overcome so completely that this twentieth volume in the sequence has had as representative a scope as the first of them.

Among these friends of poetry are, as usual, the editors of periodicals and the publishers of books to which certain poems have already been transferred; including 'The Storm,' by Walter de la Mare, in *Bells and Grass*—Faber: 'Raiders' Dawn,' by Alun Lewis, in *Raiders' Dawn and Other Poems*—Allen and Unwin: 'House in Wartime,' by Richard Church, in *The Solitary Man*—Dent: 'Youth in the Skies,' by Herbert Asquith in a volume with that title—Sidgwick and Jackson: 'The First of April,' by Geoffrey Johnson, in *The Timeless Land*—Williams and Norgate: 'W. H. Davies,' by John Gawsworth, in *Maplow Hill*—Richards: and 'The Children,' by William Soutar, in his privately printed *In the Time of Tyrants*.

They as well as the poets have the gratitude of the selector, who, incidentally, finds it necessary to remind readers again that the word 'Best' is used on the title-page only in the sense that the poems included are his own artistic preferences. It is also necessary to explain that the year stated in the title opened in July 1940 and ended in June 1941. Nor does the editor hesitate to repeat last year's declaration by him that the poets are writing as bravely and impressively as ever. Though the air has been fouled even more vilely, there is still splendour.

THOMAS MOULT.

THE BEST POEMS OF 1941

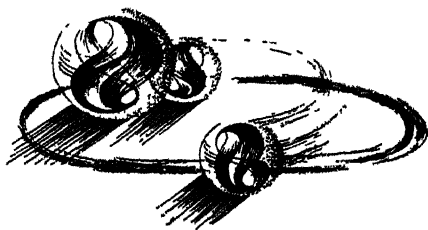
RALPH FRIEDRICH

WORDS IN A PERILOUS TIME

OF time that yearns to teach us grief,
Of death that like a seed must lie
Within the heart of all our joy,
Let us be heedless now, nor cry

Against the plotted treachery
Of days unborn. Accept this night
For joy alone, and fashion here
Such brief and excellent delight

As will outlast the eventual day
Of time's success. O love, forget
A while the fleeing excellence,
The shadow not upon us yet.



RICHARD ROWLEY

THE VOICE

ON a lane in Moneydarragh,
I, climbing my lone,
My heart on the mountain-head,
My eyes on the way I trod,
Heard a miraculous tone
The voice of a demon or God,
And knew not what it said.

I have talked with old wise men
Disputing in the schools;
I have heard soldiers expounding
Warfare's bestial rules;
I have chattered with merchants,
And gossiped with fools;
But once the voice of Wisdom
Whispered in my ear,
In a loanin' of Moneydarragh,
And nobody near.

LAURIE LEE

POEM

THE evening, the heather,
the unsecretive cuckoo
and butterflies in their disorder;
not a word of war as we lie,
our mouths in a hot nest
and the flowers advancing.

Does a hill defend itself,
does a river run to earth
to hide its quaint neutrality?
A boy is shot with England in his brain,
but she lies brazen yet beneath the sun,
she has no honour and she has no fear.



DONALD J. PAQUETTE

LINES TO THE ELITE

IF I could paint the beauty of a rose —
but you have seen the beauty of many a rose;
if I could play the nightingale's fragile flute —
but you have listened to many a nightingale:
The butterfly's wings are a delicate elusive hue;
but you have read much about them, lady
(too much perhaps), and seen them too:

But that poor bastard with the crooked arm
feeding the foundry furnace for eighteen-a-week,
day in day out, year after hellish year:
the despair in his face, the hunger in his eyes,
the sweat creaking down his creviced cheeks,
the coaldust caked on his ribby chest:
six kids at home, an old father, a wife with a
tumour;
the rent due, the doctor not giving a damn, the
coffee-can empty —
wondered if the score was right or wrong:
I have trailed the eternal scorekeeper through thick
and thin,
but he was silent always as my own shadow.

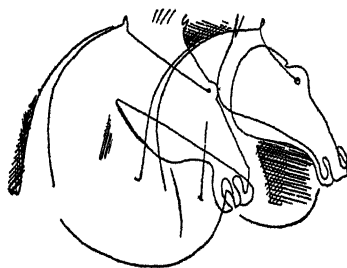
I have considered the lilies of the field,
the fortitude of shrubs rooted in rock,
the daring of spring's first violets,
the purpose of the lonely pod
that shields its peas from winter's windy weather
and the love of the lean bitch that eats her puppies'
dung.

I have marvelled at the fellowship of sheep,
the inevitable ubiquity of Time,
the eerie echo of the salty sea-shell,
the hospitality of old trees on the hillside,
the tenacity and stubbornness of stone
and the distant dreamy permanence of stars.
I have fingered the worn pockets of sleepy old
death,
cracked many a hard nut from the tree of life
and sifted the smouldering ashes of mind and
matter—
but found a doubt for every certainty.

I have seen men blown to bloody bits, have heard
the last faint echo of a comrade's heart—
have counted the futile dead, bloated and broken,
strewn like old stumps in a fire-swept field.
I have seen Honesty hurled in the ditch, Thievery
pedestalled,
Honour evaporate overnight, Beauty trampled
underfoot
like an enemy's muddy banner—seen Caesar resur-
rected,
a thousand Christs crucified!
I have gazed at the bronze busts of Greed and Lust,
and seen
the Lord's legal agents here weave flowery garlands
for Murder's brutal brow . . .
I have fidgeted on bony buttocks through forty
semesters
from here to yonder, from pillar to post,

Lady, I say, lady,
if you could have seen the look on that guy's face

the day they fired him for asking a two-dollar rise;
if I could paint the horror of that face—
the fear, the futility, the dark desperation,
the God-awful glint in those grim eyes,
that would be something really something, lady—
something worth remembering
I assure you!



C. DAY LEWIS

POEM

A FORWARD child, a sullen boy,
My living image in the pool,
The glass that made me look a fool —
He was my judgment and my joy.

The bells that chimed above the lake,
The swans asleep in evening's eye,
Bright transfers pressed on memory
From him their gloss and anguish take.

When I was desolate, he came
A wizard way to charm my toys:
But when he heard a stranger's voice
He broke the toys, I bore the shame.

I built a house of crystal tears
Amid the myrtles for my friend:
He said, no man has ever feigned
Or kept the lustre of my years.

Later, a girl and I descried
His shadow on the fern-flecked hill,
His double near our bed: and still
The more I lived, the more he died.

Now a revenant slips between
The fine-meshed minutes of the clock
To weep the time we lost and mock
All that my desperate ditties mean.

DAVID MORTON

THE LIPS WILL PART

NOT only when the lips are levelled dust,
Anonymous and lost in some far field,
Will the inordinate flowering passion thrust
The blossom forth, through lips no longer sealed,—
Where boy and girl who cross the transient spring
Find suddenly — and nearly hid in grass —
The sweet surprise whose frailty needs must bring
Tears to their love, tears that the lovely pass. . . .

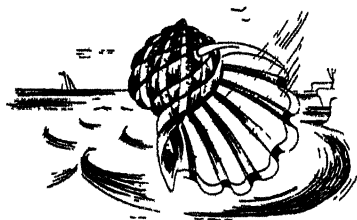
But here and now, in this immediate hour,
The lips will part, the breath will wander through,
And mortal breath become the immortal flower
Whose mystic seed, the soil wherein it grew,
Were never known in any field of Time,
Being petalled of light, and fragrant of sweet rhyme.



DANIEL WHITEHEAD HICKY

FOG OFF BRUNSWICK SOUND

LIKE a great seagull lost and flying blind
Fog rides the lower reaches of the sky,
Spreading grey fluttering wings upon the wind,
Dipping into the sea beyond the cry
Of shrimp-boats and their masters' hoarsening
 horn,
Flapping against the brows of fishermen staring
Shoreward with pale, salt-weary eyes that burn,
Seeing against the east no promise of clearing.
Blow out, O foghorn, blow! Your plaintive blast
Is not the voice of sea and fog alone—
It is the throat, the cry of all men lost
Deep in the cities' canyons of steel and stone,
On starless deserts or the mountains' height,
Crying forever for a hand, a light.



STEPHEN SPENDER

THE WAR GOD

WHY cannot the one good
Benevolent feasible
Final dove descend?
And the wheat be divided?
And the soldiers sent home?
And the barriers torn down?
And the enemies forgiven?
And there be no retribution?

Because the conqueror
Is an instrument of power,
With merciless heart hammered
Out of former fear,
When today's vanquished
Destroyed his noble father,
Filling his cradle with anguish.

His irremediable victory
Chokes back sobbing anxiety
Lest children of the slain
(When the ripe ears grow high
To sickles of his own
And the sun goes down)
Rise in iron morning
To stain with blood the sky
And avenge their fathers again.

His heart broke before
His raging splendour.

The virgins of prayer
Fumble vainly for that day
Buried under ruins,
Of his pride's greatest murder,
When his heart which was a child
Asking and tender,
He hunted and killed.

The lost filled with lead
On the helpless field
May dream the pious reason
Of mercy, but also
Their eyes know what they did
In their own proud season,
Their dead teeth bite the earth
With semen of hatred.

For the world is the world,
And not the slain,
Nor the slayer, forgive;
Nor do wild shores
Of passionate histories
Close on endless love;
Though hidden under seas
Of chafing despair,
Love's need does not cease.



HERBERT ASQUITH

YOUTH IN THE SKIES

THESE who were children yesterday
Now move in lovely flight,
Swift-glancing as the shooting stars
That cleave the summer night;

A moment flashed, they came and went,
Horizons rise and fall,
The speed of valour lifts them up
And strength obeys their call.

The downs below are breathing peace
With thyme and butterflies,
And sheep at pasture in the shade—
And now from English skies

These who were children yesterday
Look down with other eyes:
Man's desperate folly was not theirs
But theirs the sacrifice.

Old men may wage a war of words,
Another race are these,
Who flash to glory dawn and night
Above the starry seas.

CONRAD AIKEN

FIVE SONNETS

I

SHAPE has no shape, nor will your thinking
shape it;
Space has no confines, and no borders time;
And yet to think the abyss is to escape it,
And fix that horror's margin in a rhyme.
Wind blows from heaven, the worlds from chaos
pour,
Pour into chaos, gone again, the night
Foams on an emptiness that has no shore,
And all infinity like leaves in flight—
All flowing, passing, like the bloodstream here,
Which shapes its whispered moment in your hand,
Shapes too the hand that holds this moment dear,
Itself already pouring into sand;
Yet, in the instant that we think it, will
That chaos shape our kiss, and so be still.

II

How many clouds must wraithlike rise from ocean,
Shine and assemble toward the dragnet sun,
How vast and slow, how subtle all that motion,
Before the darkening, and the rain begun!
How many nights of rain to end this drouth,
The dark sky labouring on earth's labouring breast!
How many kisses, love, to brim that mouth,
And lead the goddess to her fruitful rest!
O south-west wind, bring back the rain, and bring
Propitious darkness to my love and me:

Though love no season knows, let this be spring,
And in my shadow let her fruitful be.
Trefoil and cinquefoil shine on earth's bare bosom.
This be our omen, that we too may blossom.

III

Green, green, and green again, and greener still,
Spring toward summer bends the immortal bow,
And northward breaks the wave of daffodil,
And northward breaks the wave of summer's snow.
Green, green, and green again, and greener yet,
Wide as this forest is, which counts its leaves,
Wide as this kingdom in a green sea set,
Which round its shores perpetual blossom weaves;
Green, green, and green again, and green once
more

The season rounds its term; then greenest, even,
When frost at twilight on the leaf lies hoar
And one cold star shines bright in greenest heaven.
But love, like music, keeps no seasons ever:
Like music too, once known is known forever.

IV

How then the wingèd splendours round us tower!
Ourselves enthroned amid a hushed dominion
Where rock and voice speak of the selfsame hour,
And time, like space, stoops to become our minion.
Angelic presences of fire and ice,
The humbler presences of tick and mote,
Whisper of thunder to the oriole's voice,
Evening and morning in a single note.
There past and future, for ourselves conjoined,

Lift the vast vault that shadows our embrace:
For us, this heavenly arch of stars was groined,
God's waste and wreckage builded for your face.
All things despised, dispersed, in us unite,
And shape a glory of the Infinite.

V

Sun-born and moon-born, sun-birth and moon-
birth, we
Like the twinned stars were twinned, and twinned
to dance

Each in the other's flame, the Gemini
Circling and changing for each change and chance:
Flame-light and swift, our steps divinely vary,
Yet never farther than each circle rings;
Thus to time's end we dance our alfridary,
Bringing to pass, and pace, predicted things.
As the great Ptolemy, proud chronocrat,
Plumbed the Chaldean tables, drew his chart,
Set out his watery moon, marked this from that,
The cabalistic housings of his heart—
So we these names and numbers, all foreseeing,
Dance, like the day his weather, into being.



JAMES WALKER

AUDIT. SEPTEMBER 1939

LET us reflect now, since we had forgotten,
Look back on old vows shattered, dreams once
known,
And search our skies for truth, that clouded
star. . . .

We had so much of trust to answer for:
Our road was clear at morning; time had been
Most gluttonous of youth before our own,
Borne in one golden yield
So many summers' harvests from the field,
And wintered forests in their April green.
We thought our crowded noon a long forever,
And in our poverty we pawned endeavour
To be reclaimed upon some richer day;
'Time will be kind,' we said;
'Be slow,' we said,
'Claim no more feus of us; and all those dead
Whose youth went sweet to air like music fading
Quicken our eyes again, make sharp our minds,
And give our hands their cunning back again. . . .'
We had so much of trust to answer for.

And now, if night comes,
If the long night comes
That no dawn shall dispel nor lark sing out—
Or not for us—what shall remain? what stays?
When death the vulture leaves the naked bone,
Of all mind learned, hand shaped, or heart had
known?

What monuments were made, what songs were
 sung,
What jewels fashioned newly for time's crown,
In this, our generation, shall endure?
No echo comes. And this is time's revenge:
The lark resurgent and Orion striding
Shall bring the seasons in and watch them go
In motley beauty by, immutably,
Towards a Harvest we may never know.

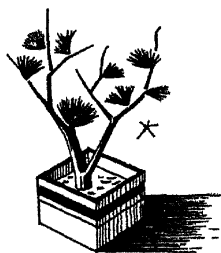


WITTER BYNNER

AUTUMN TREE

THERE'S April in the Autumn
December in the May;
There are many Springs forgotten,
More that stay.

Much has bereaven me
And still bereaves,
But I feel like an autumn tree
Taking back its leaves.



J. C. HALL

SPRING OFFENSIVE

LIKE the battalions of Europe now,
Spring with a swift and seasonable manœuvre
Conquers the land. The early flowers throw

Cordons of light around us and the bird
Encircling with song the intrepid lover
Wrings her courageous and unflinching word.

So is our covenant with time fulfilled
And from our exile restoration won.
Death welcomes the hero; reconciled

One to the other, tyrant and martyr cling.
High in dominion, the demented sun
Blisters each tree to bud until the spring

Explodes in a flash of leaf and love reveals
The year's Cordelia who wounds and heals.

AUGUST DERLETH

BROOK SOUND AT EVENING

AROUND the time-scarred battlefield where now
cows graze beneath the bough
of willow, aspen, cottonwood
the brook flows riverward—

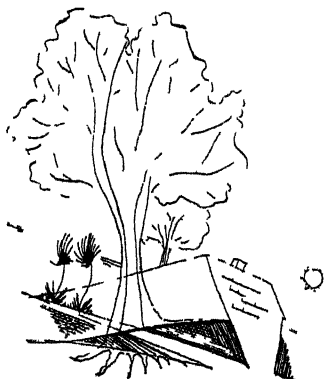
*In mid-afternoon the Hawk,
rising skyward on his pony, saw the water flowing, turned
to talk,
and cautioned: 'Follow to the river!'*

With endless water sound,
the brook flows riverward around
the field.

*There in that afternoon the troops came
up again
just as a misty rain
began to fall, and bullets sang over water and the meadow
where
in deep grass the Sacs retreated:
tired, hungry, outnumbered, but not defeated:
fell back upon the Heights in twilit air.*

Murmuring still, seeking way out
of hills to river and the sea,
the brook bends and turns about
the place where once lay dead
white men and red.

A century gone: the stream
makes its way as always there, a gleam
in summer sun; the phantom Sacs still stride
invisible the field where cows graze placidly beside
the water and the aged trees,
and hear the voice of history as water sound, the
hum of bees.



DOROTHY L. SAYERS

THE ENGLISH WAR

['What other race on earth, well aware of its danger, isolated to fight, would utter a great sigh of relief that all had abandoned it, and say to itself: "Well, thank goodness for that; now we know where we are"?'—PHILIP JORDAN, in a broadcast.]

PRAISE God, now, for an English war —
The grey tide and the sullen coast,
The menace of the urgent hour,
The single island, like a tower,
Ringed with an angry host.

This is the war that England knows,
When all the world holds but one man —
King Philip of the galleons,
Louis, whose light outshone the sun's,
The conquering Corsican;

When Europe, like a prison door,
Clangs; and the swift, enfranchised sea
Runs narrower than a village brook;
And men who love us not, yet look
To us for liberty;

When no allies are left, no help
To count upon from alien hands,
No waverers remain to woo,
No more advice to listen to,
And only England stands.

This is the war we always knew,
When every county keeps her own,
When Kent stands sentry in the lane,
And Fenland guards her dyke and drain,
Cornwall, her cliffs of stone;

When from the Cinque Ports and the Wight,
From Plymouth Sound and Bristol Town,
There comes a noise that breaks our sleep,
Of the deep calling to the deep
Where the ships go up and down,

And near and far across the world
Hold open wide the water-gates,
And all the tall adventurers come
Homeward to England, and Drake's drum
Is beaten through the Straits.

This is the war that we have known
And fought in every hundred years,
Our sword, upon the last, steep path,
Forged by the hammer of our wrath
On the anvil of our fears.

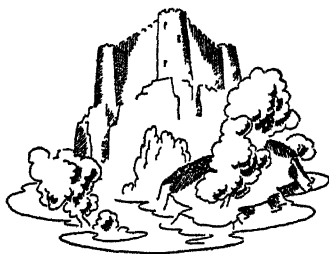
Send us, O God, the will and power
To do as we have done before;
'The men that ride the sea and air
Are the same men their fathers were
To fight the English war.

And send, O God, an English peace—
Some sense, some decency, perhaps
Some justice, too, if we are able,
With no sly jackals round our table,
Cringing for blood-stained scraps;

No dangerous dreams of wishful men
Whose homes are safe, who never feel
The flying death that swoops and stuns,
The kisses of the curtseying guns
Slavering their streets with steel;

No dreams, Lord God, but vigilance,
That we may keep, by might and main,
Inviolat seas, inviolat skies;—
But, if another tyrant rise,
Then we shall fight again.

Battle of Britain, 1940



LAURENCE WHISTLER

TENSE AND MOOD

YOU were. And that you were, unknown,
How can I but be sad,
Invade your childhood like a ghost
And grudge the things you did?
Here from this faded photograph
Your 'teens reach out a hand,
And longing recreates for me
The whisper of that crooked sea
Upon its crooked sand.

You are. And that you are, I do
In all my prayers rejoice,
For all my days revolve around
One loveliness, one face.
Framed in the shadows of that door,
With tangled hair half-blind,
You smile—how should you dream that more
Is caught into your brilliant hair
Than mere ephemeral wind?

You will be. O but that you will
How dare I leave to chance?
The present flowers like a match:
The darkness is immense.
To frame what I desired and found
What door is creeping wide?
What country must you look upon?
And shall we venture out as one?
My love, I am afraid.

FREDERIC PROKOSCH

THE HEROES

AND then they moved. Sunlight covered them
like a song.

They turned their clipped, indifferent heads once
more,

They smiled, and seemed to wait: their long
Brown arms shone like water and the shore

Muttered, like a gigantic animal in pain.

The women and children were no more than birds
Or leaves, or drops of rain.

They were incapable of thoughts or words.

And these tall smiling figures, legendary,
Though a week before they had been only men,
Stood on the brink of the past; all the fury
And hallucination of the past rose up again,

Rose up and covered them like fever, or a song.
They were statues. They scarcely seemed to move
As they moved away. They had grown tall and
strong,

Their eyes glowed with a new and hidden love.

The women did not understand at all. They stood
And waited till the ship was gone. Their grief
Was like the warm rain falling on a leaf
Falling into the hollow of a wood.

A. A. MILNE

LONDON

[*Si monumentum requiris, circumspice*]

OLD London's time-encrusted walls
Are but the work of human hands.
What man has fashioned for us falls;
What God has breathed into us stands.

What if the splendour of the past
Is shattered into dust, we raise
A monument that shall outlast
Even the Abbey's span of days.

On broken homes we set our feet
And raise proud heads that all may see,
Immortal in each little street,
The soul in its integrity.



DAVID MORTON

DUST STORM

THE invisible moths of time, concealed in air,
Thronging the sunlight where the morning
grows,
Assault the mortal vesture everywhere,
To heap a sullen ruin on the rose
In gardens, in the cheek loved of the lover,
In love itself, along the breath we breathe—
The small, quick swords will cut and slay and cover
With a slow dust the shining good beneath.

Look to horizons, to the west, to east:
That innocent-seeming air is wild with storm,
The sabre-toothed, the myriad-headed beast;
And think how naught is salvaged from that
swarm,
Save by the word, elusive still of time,
That leads the rose from ruin into rhyme.



WILLIAM SOUTAR

THE CHILDREN

UPON the street they lie
Beside the broken stone:
The blood of children stares from the broken stone.

Death came out of the sky
In the bright afternoon:
Darkness slanted over the bright afternoon.

Again the sky is clear
But upon earth a stain:
The earth is darkened with a darkening stain:

A wound which everywhere
Corrupts the hearts of men:
The blood of children corrupts the hearts of men.

Silence is in the air:
The stars move to their places:
Silent and serene the stars move to their places:

But from earth the children stare
With blind and fearful faces:
And our charity is in the children's faces.

GEOFFREY JOHNSON

THE FIRST OF APRIL

TODAY the swards of heaven are merry;
It is not dew alone, but laughter
That shakes the whiteness of wild cherry
And sets the blackbirds ringing after.
The saints of earth who got derision
And stripes for their translunar dreaming,
The fools of all the world whose vision
Was set on brave impossible scheming,
Have somehow met and greet each other
Like rivers to one ocean running:
Saint Francis hails Columbus brother,
Sir Thomas More and Lamb are punning.
The clouds are splendour-splashed or frowning
In antics of divine unreason;
Saint Hilary leads the fools in clowning
And Goldsmith flutes the saintly glees on,
While blackbirds mimic with their laughter
The cries, 'Who thought it would ensue, sir,
That we should meet such ages after?
A merry First to you . . . and you, sir.'



WALTER DE LA MARE

THE VISION

O STARRY face, bound in grave strands of hair,
Aloof, remote, past word or thought to bless,
Life's haunting mystery and the soul's long care,
Music unheard, heart's inmost silentness,
Beauty this earthly life can ne'er fulfil —
Thou garnered loveliness of earth, sky, sea —
Which in its fainting pilgrimage is still
Steadfast desire of my soul's loyalty;
Death's haunting harp-strings, sleep's mandragora,
Mockery of waking and the dark's despair,
Life's changeless vision that fades not away —
O starry face, bound in grave strands of hair!
Hands faintly sweet with flowers from fields
unseen,
Breasts cold as mountain snow and far waves'
foam,
Eyes changeless and immortal and serene —
Spent am I, Wanderer, and you call me home!



JOHN GAWSWORTH

W. H. DAVIES

WHILE yet he lived
No man could say:
'Honey's unhived:
Song's put away.'
Sweetness he gave
In the sour day.

While yet he breathed
None might declare:
'No laurel's wreathed;
All brows go bare.'
Vale! Gulielme,
Campion's heir.



12, 13). How then can we claim finality for His revelation ?

If Jesus' promise is to find fulfilment, those who profess to follow Him ought to find new facets of truth opened to them as they advance on the route indicated by their Master. Unfortunately, man is so constituted that if he does not progress he does not merely stagnate but deteriorates. To justify the trust and responsibility reposed in him, man has to make use of his talents. That is the condition of all advance. In the parable of the talents the servant who buried his talent in the earth hoping to preserve it is condemned (Matt. XXV. 24, 30). The Churches which claim finality for Jesus' revelation are in this position. The tragedy of it all is the Churches usurped the place of the Spirit of Truth and professed authority to lay down the way of life for all. Anything new from any other source was considered heretic and was suppressed with all the violence human ingenuity could devise. The results have been a terrible backsliding from the standards of Jesus. As proof, behold the battlefields of Europe.

The two mighty and doughty champions of the Church—the Britain of Wesley and the Germany of Luther—are locked in the most deadly, violent and bloody struggle in the

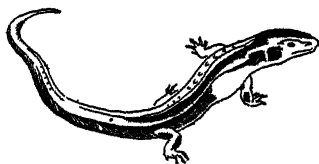
R. N. CURREY

FROM 'EXILE, A SEQUENCE'

MAN'S roots are not in earth; while trees and
flowers
Stand in one place, the intimate atmospheres
Blown through their leaves, and the remoter
spheres
Of space whirled round them every twenty-four
hours,

Even the peasant, who, in growing showers,
Stands solid in his furrow, at times tears
His boots from clinging mud, and slowly fares
To church, or pub, or war with foreign powers;

But, as a ship, or migrant bird, or deer
Moves in a limited orbit, driving back
On pre-determined courses, so with man;
His many-branching lungs are roots in air;
Eyes, tongue, and mind have roots; and he is
drawn
By vital tissues, dying if they crack.



HERBERT PALMER

ODE: SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER, 1939

INCREDIBLE Huns! vile Goths! — under God's
ban.'

Description staggers on the lips of Man;
For now, by every measure of the Sky,
Soul of 'High Germany,' how low you fly! . . .
Why the dark plunge? Can Reason sing us why?

Blight on earth's bloom! Has Hell gaped?
Drowned each good?

And yet, I think, for all your hands of blood
You're as you were when Power was in its bud . . .
Most strange! For have these islands fostered
more

True men of mighty learning and strange lore,
Or souls deep skilled in arts the skies adore?

I've lived long years among you, known you
well, —

Have loved you, loathed you, feared you, felt your
spell,

Received great kindness from you, — dare I tell?
And now I stand and wonder, thorn in side,
At the dread menace swinging on War's tide,
And you, misguided people, drugged with
Pride, —

By glare of light massed Evil, though in shade
You're mixed as plants in a broad forest glade —
Heroes and rogues, and kindly men gone mad,
And brutes and saints, and weakly good and bad,

Who cross, divide, blend, clash and intertwine,
Mean souls and high, the spotted with the fine.
Like ours? I'll say not. Only this I know:—
Your worst seem worse, because they flame and
glow,
Your bad seem made to mount and overflow.

‘And now they’ve triumphed; that’s the turmoil’s
truth.

Your bad have won the power, the grip on youth;
And, wrapped in pagan wisdom, lured the eyes
To see in War a vision grand and wise;
And, dread perversion, made the sick heart bleed
To fortify its blood of wrath and greed;
And chained your tongues, and crucified your ears,
And made your land a prison-house of tears.—
To right the wrong, they tell you, wrong we
wrought

When at Versailles Hope’s spirit sank distraught;
To bring back thews and sinews. But strange cause
To rack the Sky to straighten erring laws;
Strange cause for crooked walls and shadowed
eyes,

For pride and persecution, fraud and lies,
Dishonour’d faith, and little children’s cries;
Strange cause for metal hearts and hands of doom,
Arches awry and balustrades of gloom.

Who bent your Christian cross and gave it claws?
Strange star of Hope! Strange sufferings’ balm!
Strange Cause!

Break then this power, that other strength may
reign!

Set straighter beams, new timber to the planel

Haſten! Break! Batter! Break! Then lift, and
mend. . . .

Dark looms the effort, ſhadow-fraught the end! . . .
Foiled hopes! Yet hark! A ruſtle—thoughts
aligned,—
Hands ſeeking hands, and fingers at the blind.

But cries of Death aſſail our ears too loud,
And ſhapes of War obſcure the ſtified crowd.
So now the brunt of effort muſt be ours
To nail the ſcourge that on the ſunſet lours,
And ſternly—leſt its claws find Freedom’s home
And rock Life’s walls, and ſcar the rainbow’s dome.

Where, though, the hammer? How to conquer?
How?

What answer muſt we bring ourſelves, here, now?
Truſt in the Sky; and ſtar the ſpirit’s brow.
And can *you*, with your ſoul in ſwaddling bands?
The winds muſt answer—till we’ve found your
hands. .

But here in England few ſhall ſtare ſo blind
That we diſdain Life’s wings and fail her mind.
Then what can hinder?—though the ſteeples fall,
And rage and frenzy ſhatter and appal,
And courage faints, and gentle hearts grow wild,
And love and joy are trampled and defiled;
For where’s the power of Evil to efface
The Mind that knows the noble from the baſe
And in yon fourfold gallows reads the ſign
To break the will and ſtrangle the divine?
Oh, can the dragon heart of Satan reign
Whiſt eyes can tell God’s ſymbol from its ſtain?

So fail who must; and onwards who can see,
By vision bless'd, by Faith and Hope set free,
By arms of Right made dauntless to oppose
The serfs of Dread and Honour's grappling foes.
For here's a Cause to make the spirit sing
And fire the blood and lift each draggled wing,
And cleanse our flag, oft wrongly striven for,
And make it holy, though it be by War.

And there's a clean wind marching down the night,
Blue as the sky, and wrapped in mellowing light,
With sword to succour, and bright hands to guide,
The stars' will in its swelling, billowing stride,
Spacious, serene, and heavenly of form,
Its heart a sunrise to invade the storm.



CLIFFORD DYMENT

THE TEMPLE

LUKE tells us how Jesus
Was missed on the return to Galilee:
He had tarried in the Temple, zealous to learn
What his Father's will was to be.

I think of this page in Luke now.
I have left the soldiery to march ahead
And I lie here, the hawthorn budding,
The celandines like stars 'about my head.

This morning I surprised a stoat
Feasting on the blood of a hare;
And now, all around me, the wedding songs of
birds
Blossom in the air.

I ponder: some million years ago
Forests and crying fearful beasts perished
When a sea shuddered and threw up a mountain
To make this hill on which I rest.

Must death create? I speak
My question in this Temple under the sky —
But no answer comes from stoat or bird or hill
Whether it is man's Cross to kill, or die.

RICHARD CHURCH

A HOUSE IN WAR TIME

LOOK at this ancient house; it has survived
Three centuries of time, and human history.
Things have grown old in it. Grandfather clocks
Have frayed much catgut hauling down the hours;
Pot handles have worn smooth, and poker knobs
Been polished by palms long folded over breasts
Now quiet and untroubled in the churchyard.

Search any corner here, attic or cellar,
Odd pantry cupboard or a gunroom shelf;
You'll find the throw-outs of ten generations,
Household rubbish made romantic by time,
Print bonnets, bundles of letters, broken toys,
Pathetic vestiges of civilised life,
Emblems of peace and a continued growth
In one place, in one faith, of civil man
And all his works.

Here is the centre of it,
That long activity in hope; the plans,
The achievement, the discarded and replaced,
All gathered in this house beneath a roof
Where the bats hang, and hermit spiders lurk.

I should be sure enough of all I hold
Within such walls. I should look out through
windows.
Set three feet back in mellowed brick and stone,
And stand secure amid my universe
Now turning to its rich, late summer days,
Life's discipline grown fruitful. I should see,

Like some old patriarch in a lost religion,
My wife and children round me, the fulfilment
Of mutual love beyond the need of words.

Instead, I hear the wind wail in the walls.
By night and day I hear the fleets of death
Pass overhead, to deal out mutilation
On those who have no quarrel with the sky,
But look to it as their forefathers looked,
For rain, for sunshine, for the busy song
Of larks in spring, and movement of the stars,
Those symbols of a God half-understood.

The ancient house dissolves. My lifework thins,
And a reverberation tears it down.
My gathered harvest is consumed in fire,
Thunder, and fire that flashes in their eyes,
My loved ones, gone down in their agony.

The raid is done. The sky is clear again
For stars by night, and singing lark by day.
Eternity once more puts on the mask
Of time, to hide its dreadful wisdom from me.

Still, after peril, stands my house foursquare.
Still, with the nightmare passed, I may contrive
To comfort those I yet may call my own.
The clock ticks on, the bat and spider keep
A sacred shadow in the roof above.
Laughter, love's fullest echo, fills the house.
Nothing has changed, except that Universe
I dared to raise, before I looked on fear.

OSCAR WILLIAMS

SUBWAY

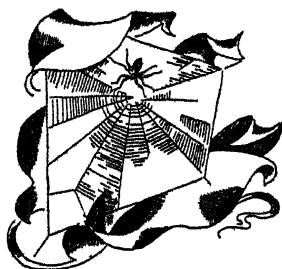
UNDER the church's lawn, in the land of electric
clocks,
The subway train is plunging into the lungs of the
rocks:
And as the bald Negro with the glasses reads his
True Story
And the old woman is quivering behind her morn-
ing glory,
The inconceivable girl with the time-table, feather
and leer,
A mammoth dumpling of sex, is ensconced on the
atmosphere.

Beneath the tons of complacency the subway deftly
delves
With people sitting satisfied with their disconsolate
selves:
A child across the way is dangling out of a fairy-
tale book,
Dipping in the advertisements the divining rod of
her look:
The dismal fans are languidly stroking the beard of
the wind:
Behind the newspaper fronts the sins of thought
are sinned.

This is the skin of death and every pore is a face
Pulsating against tomorrow, the vacuum thighs of
space:

This is life the story-teller, telling endless tales
To keep himself alive as the iron eyelid falls:
This is the explosion chamber, the secret room of
the spark
Where the populations whirl with the poured
breath of the dark.

A jungle of prongs is scraping the tough hide of the
present:
The huge centipede of station leaps at the vein
imprisoned:
The subway's galvanized throat is torn into craters
of speed:
The sullen meanwhile is bulging with the ingots of
greed:
And what is true is in conspiracy with the thing
that seems
And steel continues to scream, so long as man
screams.

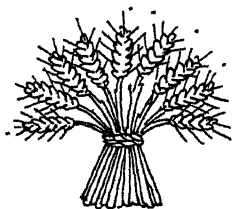


EDMUND BLUNDEN

THE FINE NATURE

THIS fine nature clear
Goes as a stream through brake and pasture,
Doubting not, disdaining none,
Fair friend alike of shade and sun.
We happening near
Are offered without any rumour or fear
A gentleness, a strength, the way
That first was meant the heart of man
Should go, when meeting the unsolved hours,
And so few can,
But this one counts the age in flowers:
So fragrance, colour, jewel, song
Attend along.

How great the miracle I find,
While all is zoned with thunder-smoke,
In such a constant mind, —
Which, serious-playful as the brook,
And with like gift of beauty won .
From stem or stone, from walk or run,
Amid my meadows cannot be
But ever kind and ever free.



JOSEPH JOEL KEITH

IN THE DESERT

HERE is where silence grows
still, as the listening ear
remembers what it knows,
like a clear

imprint lettered in stone.
Here is a breathing sound
not lost; though one's alone,
this ground,

air, and the joshua trees
whisper and pray and tell
the heart what it will seize
and know well.

Wandering silence is spread.
The racing heart and mind
are touched and quieted,
and they find,
here where all thought is fed,
what they will find.

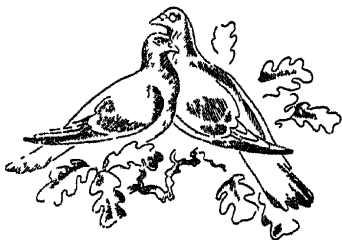


ERNEST RHYS

THE BUGLER

EARLY this morning, dawn laggard and drear,
Was it you, jolly Robin, that whistled so clear,
On the black brink of the 'Pit of the Year,'
Three breves on your bugle, then three or four
more?

Was it you, jolly Robin, that woke Chanticleer,
And rang the *Reveille* above the barnyard,
While the milkmaid stood still, still as stone, as she
heard,
For you whistled up Spring and the end of the War?



ALFRED KREYMBORG

THEY ARE NOT YET DEAD

Waterloo Day, 1940

[*'Most of them carried long loaves of rain-soaked bread.' —
News Item.*]

THEY are not yet dead.
Most of them carried long loaves of rain-soaked
bread
under their arms,
uniforms muddy and faded,
faces and bodies
raided by defeat,
except for the beastly hunger
that knows no retreat.
Commanded to halt,
prisoners dropped in the gutters and ate
whatever was left of the bread:
It was not yet dead,
Nor tooth and tongue,
the palate and stomach late.
The land impaled
on a German cross,
Hunger was king
where all other kings had failed,
and the vulgar rain
derided Napoleon's tomb
as much as to say an ironic sky
is cool to immortal pain,
defeat or glory — It might as well rain.
There was nothing the lost could do
but to bite and chew, tear and chew
and keep the body from going too:
They were not yet dead,
the bodies and bread.

And what they were called together for
or why their commanders had gone to war
was now reduced to an appetite
for keeping alive another night;
and so the future raised their feet
to stumble through another street.
Here was no sun to revive the lungs
or challenge the rain with the Marseillaise;
And here no freedom to praise the past
nor blood enough for a hopeful speech.
Paris was down and the soldiers knew
how the fathers felt at Waterloo.
And these grey sons could almost feel
the stones of another grey Bastille.
Even so their hands must reach
the good French earth,
the food somehow,
And as they filed with a shrunken tread,
they had the loaves,
they had their bread.

And as the Victor commanded March
with an envious eye on Napoleon's Arch,
and a shade of that ironic smile
that gave the gods their classic style,
the souls passed under the native stone
as if the body had no bone
here and now — Nothing was said.
But shadows raised a common head
to where a single thought sustained
the heart again — although it rained.
And this was something more than bread.
They were not yet dead.
They are not yet dead.

JESSE STUART

FROM 'WORLD ENOUGH'

GREAT Night of darkness, holding me in void
Between your mountains of eternal dust;
Mine is the pen that Nature has employed,
Mine is the voice of song that she can trust.
Great Night, my living dust is still a part
Of mountain loam, of rocky jut and clay,
And Earth's Creator put into my heart
A spark of fire to make me sing my lay!
I sing of lonesome waters and the shack
While there is strength of mountains in my blood;
I sing of love, dream, work, of corn and stack,
Of winter wind and April's flowery flood.
Great Night of darkness, when you have subdued
My body's strength and turned my eyes to stone,
Deafened my ears to sound and killed my mood,
I shall be dust to grow tough trees thereon.



DAVID COLLIN

PYLONS

SLOW credulous peasant lips of earth
mutter the liturgy of the year,
the landscape babbles death and birth.
Suddenly, angular and austere

through the phlegmatic fields they pace,
inexorable saints of duty,
on each emaciated face
a far-off algebraical beauty.

Theirs is the intellectual passion,
the dangerous current in the brain;
they stride towards their consummation
impervious to joy or pain.

Spring melts the wooden souls of trees,
but, insulated from temptation,
the carnal grass about their knees,
they preach their strange new revelation,

for ever celibate and alone,
though harvests sway their gilded hips
and the flowers jostle in the sun
with a fixed smile and parted lips.

Their desperate agnosticism.
The ignorant earth that loves and breeds.
I feel the summer torn by schism
and in myself the clash of creeds.

MICHAEL ROBERTS

ISMAIL

OUR camels died on the twentieth day:
There was no water in them—
The wells filled in with concrete.
West to the arid lands, ghost-haunted,
Where the old traders passed with loads of incense,
We turned, leaving the desert that we knew,
Leaving the land of killing for the world of
death.

Our feet trod the incredible sand,
Our eyes were dazzled under the black sun,
Our tongues spoke foreign words;
And there were stars at night that spoke of water,
But by day nothing: the mirage was gone,
The world not ours.

Westward, how many days?
And the sandstorm when the voices passed
Riding in dust. Our tongues were swollen.
In eight days there might be a hope of water,
Over that hill, and the next, and the next and
next.

Seven days, and every step death. Six.
And suddenly there was water, and the date-palm,
And low shrubs giving shelter, three yards to the
right.

We had not seen it. Clear, sweet pools of water;
There was a bird singing in the date-palm,
And small tufts of flowers at the water's edge.
'Look,' we said, but the word was a faint gesture.
There was no oasis in that land: there could not be.
We saw fear, and the madness in our own minds.

Slowly, like a great weight hoisted up, we moved
away.

There was the desert, and the low hills, and the
next, and next.

We looked forward only, and there was fear
behind:

Were they lilies, floating in the cool clear pools?

Six days. And Ismail turned in the night, and so
was lost.

Five days; and a man died beside me, walking.

Four days; and there were hills, and more hills, and
the land tilted.

Here there had been a camp. Or no, that was the
next day.

And so onwards, our bodies shrivelled, our minds
burnt out.

Then the first grass blade, the real shrubs. Huts,
and men speaking.

Water. Water. Water.

By night now, the date-palms beckoning,
The stars shining in the still pools,
The black light of the sun returning,
The feathery acacia waving its yellow tufts,
Three yards to the right, in the low shrubs.

There was no water in those pools, there could
not be.

There, where the past lives undisturbed,
There could not be. Six days without water.

There was no water, there could not be.

Ismail, Ismail: Was there water in those pools,
Ismail?

EVE MERRIAM

THE DEATH OF GEOGRAPHY

IN the beginning was the word Geography
preceding centuries by scores
the shores of Sparta Rome Jerusalem
the mystery of the mild pacific jew
uncharted unknown as any hour from now.
There were the vast arc'd plains
the unploughed earth fruitful as a woman
the proud manedark mountains dignified by
distance
and the spiced glittering oceans
foreign and faraway as God.

Heros were Nile, Aegean, the Appenines.
Younger legends followed: Rhine, Bretagne, Gaul,
the whole sprawling North.
The air was stamped with silver promise
and the white Southern sails bellied like desire
impaling the luring miles on panting wooden oars.
Geography, enormous portal, swung like a hinge,
let little History creep in.

Amerigo: Balboa salty with sweat of climbing
Cortez: the turquoise eye and burnished body
de Leon and his childish womanly dream
Lewis and Clark: redwood and leather-smelling
cedar
deeds big as land: words wide as water
Oregon Dakota California.

The swollen barges down the Mississippi
the gawky Iron Horse awkward but sincere
Menlo Park Marconi Kitty Hawk
these were Geography too;
for the mountains still were mighty and untaken
(though murmured over by a few machines),
and the sea, cat-cradled far below,
remained unfingered and unclaimed.

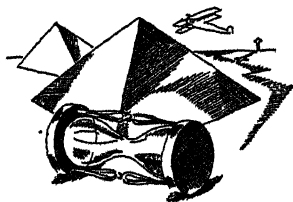
And in our time,
darters took flags to the last icy Astolats
(mere tiny tongues red-darting from immensity's
mouth);
China became the business man's daily affair,
but continued remote to most of us.
And among the prevalent muddle
there were plans for 'order, gradual growth, and
justice.
For most of us had the wish for good
if not the dangerous will.

Meanwhile History, not good at Golden Rules,
became the bully expelled from school.
Left home. Unheard from for many years.
Once a smudged card from a place called
Addis Abbabba.
Another dirty one from Barcelona.
Later the postmark was Nuremburg.
A blackmail note from Munich. . . .
Last fall came home to stay,
unrecognised by all.
Got a minor job in a quite small aeroplane factory.

And now Geography,
flapping, huge and fishly dying
its glassy eye still rolling,
demands the bloodshot question:
Were all of us guilty?
Final flop, then cold and quiet
as a real civilian corpse.

See him at the controls,
cap jaunty over one eye,
cigarette nonchalant between lips,
the carefree reckless wave,
dirty fingernails, black teeth showing as he nears . . .
Look out, look out!

And we too
under the Stuka dive of dreadful grinning History.



EDWARD THOMPSON

ENGLAND, 1941

WE who saw England once as through his eyes
Who fashioned *Thyrsis*—high mid-summer's
pride

Of sun-flushed borders: dingle and loved hillside:

Orchis, fritillary, cowslip: brambles dim

Mist-garlanded—now see that landscape swim

Into dusk ages! with the eyes of him

Whose hand is on the bomb-switch must perceive

Each moon new-mounted, dawn, and treacherous
eve!

Yon mountain is a seamount, his tall state

A finger that betrays the crouching town!

Broad fallow, level down,

Turn traitors to our peace: the chalk-limned Horses,

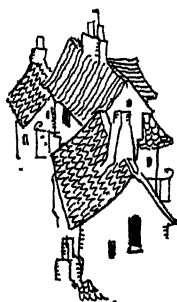
The Ancient Man, stars in their steadfast courses,

Flash signals! And this brook, whose waters flow

To push the wheel and rock the mill-pond's freight

Of sleepy lilies, beckons in the foe

To wreck the hamlet it beguiled to rise!



ROBERT FROST

COME IN

AS I came to the edge of the woods,
Thrush music— hark!
Now if it was dusk outside,
Inside it was dark.

Too dark in the woods for a bird
By sleight of wing
To better its perch for the night,
Though it still could sing.

The last of the light of the sun
That had died in the west
Still lived for one song more
In a thrush's breast.

Far in the pillared dark
Thrush music went—
Almost like a call to come in
To the dark and lament.

But no, I was out for stars:
I would not come in.
I meant not even if asked;
And I hadn't been.

LAURENCE BINYON.

THE LAMP OF GREECE

TRUTH incorruptible lives on, though sight
Cloud, and the heart flinch, and the mind askance
Reject. Because she sought that radiance—
Unweariable lover of the light!—
History's marvel, Hellas, in despite
Of interposing time and circumstance
Still stands above besieging ignorance,
Serene before the armies of the night.

The mind has flowered where she has wooed the
seed

Up from the darkness into beauty: there
Love listens, divine music fills the air,
Though we can but by glimpses understand
Who in the present anguish of our need
Look to the light as to our native land.



OSCAR WILLIAMS

A VACATION DURING WARTIME

[MacDowell Colony, Peterborough, N. H.]

THROUGH my open door I saw the green field of
June shining
Within a ring of trees resisting a great untiring
wind:
And all the day that wind of poets washed the body
of thought
And toppled towers of leaves, the buckling crags of
green,
Or ploughed onward through armies of enormous
whispers
With the rustling sound of all the dresses of history;
Then a tidal wave of trees stood up on the field's
edge,
Lifted its paws of huge breakers and roared its
verities
To my mind that sat looking from the very ledge of
my eye.

*But I remembered—remembered the snow in the mail-
box,
The panic in the twenties and the run on the Lord's
Prayer
The man crushed against the elevated pillar by a skidding
car,—
I remembered the negro hovel in the shadow of the White
House,
And the milkman leaving the milk on the suicide's door-
step.*

Through the wide-open environs of a personal
vacation
Time poured endless confetti of creaky hinges of
bird-sound:
And the magnificent cold water of New Hampshire
burned
Its quicksilver solder, a knife of ice, through my
veins
Until the brain became a glittering peacock's-tail of
streams:
And all those long days long my mind sang in
poems,
And nature laid out the miles of damask, sunset
upon sunset,
Or filled the air with tons of the thick lace of rain,
Or sat on tall dark stools of clouds on golden after-
noons
Dangling the limbs of giant cogitations at the
windows,
While the sky of democracy, blue and bland, hung
on.

*But I had heard of the arrow in the eye of Harold, last
Saxon,
Of the Spartan boy with the hidden airplane gnawing his
vitals,
Of the millennium of the Aryans foaming at spigots of
beer,
Of the refugees praying to the hills of lead in the sky—
But I remembered—remembered the blackened munition
workers
Sweating at midnight to blow the morning from babies'
brains.*

LOUIS MACNEICE

EVENING IN CONNECTICUT

EQUIPOISE: becalmed
Trees, a dome of kindness;
Only the scissory noise of the grasshoppers;
Only the shadows longer and longer.

The lawn a raft
In a sea of singing insects,
Sea without waves or mines or premonitions;
Life on a china cup.

But turning. The trees turn
Soon to brocaded autumn.
Fall. The fall of dynasties; the emergence
Of sleeping kings from caves—

Beard over the breastplate,
Eyes not yet in focus, red
Hair on the back of the hands, unreal
Heraldic axe in the hands.

Unreal but still can strike.
And in defence we cannot call on the evening
Or the seeming-friendly woods—
Nature is not to be trusted.

Nature whose falls of snow,
Falling softer than catkins,
Bury the lost and over their grave a distant
Smile spreads in the sun.

Not to be trusted, no,
Deaf at the best; she is only
And always herself, Nature is only herself,
Only the shadows longer and longer.

ANNE MORROW LINDBERGH

TESTAMENT

***B**UT how can I live without you? — she cried.*

I left all world to you when I died:
Beauty of earth and air and sea;
Leap of a swallow or a tree;
Kiss of rain and wind's embrace;
Passion of storm and winter's face;
Touch of feather, flower and stone;
Chiselled line of branch or bone;
Flight of stars, night's caravan;
Song of crickets — and of man —
All these I put in my testament,
All these I bequeathed you when I went.

*But how can I see them without your eyes
Or touch them without your hand?
How can I hear them without your ear,
Without your heart, understand?*

These too, these too
I leave to you!



ROBERT NATHAN

DUNKIRK

WILL came back from school that day,
And he had little to say.
But he stood a long time looking down
To where the grey-green Channel water
Slapped at the foot of the little town,
And to where his boat, the *Sarah P*,
Bobbed at the tide on an even keel,
With her one old sail, patched at the leech,
Furled like a slattern down at heel.

He stood for a while above the beach;
He saw how the wind and current caught her.
He looked a long time out to sea.
There was steady wind and the sky was pale,
And a haze in the east that looked like smoke.

Will went back to the house to dress.
He was half-way through when his sister Bess,
Who was near fourteen and younger than he
By just two years, came home from play.
She asked him, 'Where are you going, Will?'
He said, 'For a good long sail.'
'Can I come along?'

'No, Bess,' he spoke.
'I may be gone for a night and a day.'
Bess looked at him. She kept very still.
She had heard the news of the Flanders rout,

How the English were trapped above Dunkirk,
And the fleet had gone to get them out—
But everyone thought that it wouldn't work.
There was too much fear, there was too much
doubt.

She looked at him and he looked at her.
They were English children, born and bred.
He frowned her down, but she wouldn't stir.
She shook her proud young head.
'You'll need a crew,' she said.

They raised the sail on the *Sarah P*,
Like a penoncel on a young knight's lance,
And headed the *Sarah* out to sea,
To bring their soldiers home from France.

There was no command, there was no set plan,
But six hundred boats went out with them
On the grey-green waters, sailing fast,
River excursion and fisherman,
Tug and schooner and racing M,
And the little boats came following last.

From every harbour and town they went
Who had sailed their craft in the sun and rain,
From the South Downs, from the cliffs of Kent,
From the village street, from the country lane.
There are twenty miles of rolling sea
From coast to coast, by the seagull's flight,
But the tides were fair and the wind was free,
And they raised Dunkirk by the fall of night.

They raised Dunkirk with its harbour torn
By the blasted stern and the sunken prow;
They had raced for fun on an English tide,
They were English children bred and born,
And whether they lived or whether they died,
They raced for England now.

Bess was as white as the *Sarah's* sail,
She set her teeth and smiled at Will.
He held his course for the smoky veil
Where the harbour narrowed thin and long.
The British ships were firing strong.

He took the *Sarah* into his hands,
He drove her in through fire and death
To the wet men waiting on the sands.
He got his load and he got his breath,
And she came about, and the wind fought her.

He shut his eyes and he tried to pray.
He saw his England where she lay,
The wind's green home, the sea's proud daughter,
Still in the moonlight, dreaming deep,
The English cliffs and the English loam—
He had fourteen men to get away,
And the moon was clear and the night like day
For planes to see where the white sails creep
Over the black water.

He closed his eyes and he prayed for her;
He prayed to the men who had made her great,
Who had built her land of forest and park,
Who had made the seas an English lake;
He prayed for a fog to bring the dark;

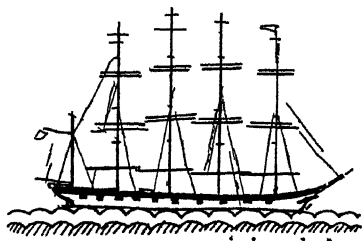
He prayed to get home for England's sake.
And the fog came down on the rolling sea,
And covered the ships with English mist.
The diving planes were baffled and blind.

For Nelson was there in the *Victory*,
With his one good eye, and his sullen twist,
And guns were out on *The Golden Hind*,
Their shot flashed over the *Sarah P*.
He could hear them cheer as he came about.

By burning wharves, by battered slips,
Galleon, frigate, and brigantine,
The old dead Captains fought their ships,
And the great dead Admirals led the line.
It was England's night, it was England's sea.

The fog rolled over the harbour key.
Bess held to the stays and conned him out.

And all through the dark, while the *Sarah's* wake
Hissed behind him, and vanished in foam,
There at his side sat Francis Drake,
And held him true and steered him home.



CONRAD PENDLETON

FREIGHTBELLS IN OREGON

THEY turn lean faces to the thawed road
Down Bacon Grade: they turn from red herds
bawling slow
To the sky's edge, turn from ditching swale
Along a creek, and tending lambs, or shoeing teams
For drill and plough.

They trace the thin bell sound
On sun-up wind to wheels creaking a load
To Klickinghorse, where faces, like budding
moments, pale—
Cluster the long hour.

They've outwaited hard snowing,
Bedding dreams in heart while hugging fire
And gnawing to apple cores. Through the last thaw
They've yawned at hollyhock orange—belling the
overflow
From creek and pond, the sun upbulging the frosty
mire,
And twigs bursting bud; but only the first freight-
bells
Over greyed stubble, over bawling and bleating,
over left straw
And old snow patches now rouse their dreams
Of ploughing stubble and flower under, of flocking
cow
And sheep on high range and cleaning rooms of
smells
And apple cores . . . Bells jangling in April, and
minds glowing
No less with yellowing wheat than dreams in
turned ground.

LORD VANSITTART

MOONLIGHT

TIME was when we were closer, Moon and Earth.
I was still-born and silent, while you cooled
And came to Life. I watched you giving birth,
And envied you—perhaps we both were
fooled—
Yet, though we drifted evermore apart,
I was no stranger to your children's heart.

Theirs was my hour. They craved the Moon's
return.

I was the friend of lovers. All romance
Flamed to my pallor. I disguised the stern
And paltry sum of human circumstance.
I silvered slum and wilderness. The sun
Has never laved your sores as I have done.

And then the German came, and from the sky
Slew babe and woman, mangled age and youth.
My light became my lovers' enemy.

My sickle cleared the very heaven of ruth.
Men saw my face with horror, and between
My risings wished that I had never been.

Now I, your satellite, do thank my stars
That I am lifeless. I would sooner have
No warmth at all than suffer total wars,
No Man at all than Huns who rape and rave
And rack. I have no History to tell.
Their feet have never soiled my asphodel.

FRAY ANGELICO CHAVEZ

VINEYARD SONG

[*'The time of pruning is come.'* — CANT. ii. 12.]

LITTLE hedge-birds, pick these brittle sticks and
work the wonder
of the round that is your wedding ring,
your bed of love, and wreath of all your living!
Little field-mice, drag these yielded weeds and
grasses under
to be wound within your burrowing
as bridal room and womb, and crown of all your
striving!
And pity one who cannot wait till there
is wine to sip, and yet his vines are bare;
who will not bide
the making of the feast
to kiss the lips before he gets the bride.
Have pity, little bird and beast
who have a nest
or hole for bed,
for I cannot find a rose-downed breast
to rest my head.

How long, O Love, how long must I yet toil,
yet till the soil,
still spill my brow's sweat
killing thorns and thistles, coil
on poles the boughs; yet
reap wild grapes perhaps, till in the end
I, too, can rest
upon your breast
like the beloved friend?

Show me
where you feed,
O Flower of the Field, and lead
my soul to know you as you know me . . .

Then shall I go back
to work my vineyard in the sun and burn
till I am black—

An ear within me hears the words:
*'If you will still not learn of Me, then learn
of mice and birds.'*



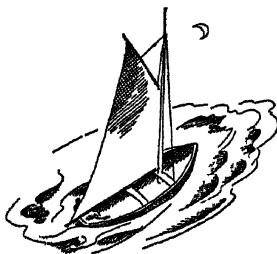
JOSEPH AUSLANDER

CHANNEL PORT

SERENELY through a sea of stars
The moon of winter rides,
Blind to our wounds, deaf to our wars,
But tyrant of our tides.

From her indifferent wrist depends
A silver punctual chain
That harnesses to restless ends
The rhythms of the rain.

Upon unholy calendars
Men mark their blood-drenched Ides. . . .
Serenely through a sea of stars
The moon of winter rides.



RUTH PITTER

BETTER THAN LOVE

ARE you there? Can you hear?
Listen, try to understand.
O be still, become an ear,
For there is darkness on this land.
Stand and hearken, still as stone,
For I call to you alone.

Who can be what the weed was
In the empty afternoon?
Who can match me the wild grass,
Sighing its forgotten tune;
Who is equal to that shell,
Whose spiral is my parable?

No human eye reflects the weed,
Burning beneath the lonely sun:
The wild hard grass spangled with seed
Is still unmatched by anyone:
The justice of the shell is still
Above the mind, above the will.

Since love and beauty, blown upon,
Are not desired, nor spoken of,
Hear me, you solitary one,
Better than beauty or than love;
Seen in the weed, the shell, the grass,
But never in my kind, alas!

The ragged weed is truth to me,
The poor grass honour, and the shell
Eternal justice, till I see
The spirit rive the roof of hell
With light enough to let me read
More than the grass, the shell, the weed.

RAYMOND E. F. LARSSON

BALLAD: THE SPRING RAIN

AH! how compassion comes, like spring,
from far! — the withered root,
the tender kneeling
of the weeping rain.

The rain has open arms
and tears: I saw the rain of winter weep
from roots, bind June
to winter's withered root.

And through the stone and frozen earth,
I saw the gaunt root give fruit
and autumn up to roof the earth,
and windwardly the leaves.

*Ah! how compassion comes, like spring,
from far! — the withered root,
the tender kneeling
of the weeping rain.*

Ah, rain who moves like music, and
solemnly, as the first of wisdom's tears:
Whose is the harvest then, when the gleaned
even earth, the deadened root, bare bough,

in the bare vast air, when even winter
is no end? Whose is the harvest, rain,
the root's, wind's or leaf's hoar-frost's
or earth's, the winds' or bitter bough's?

Aged in the ways of weeping,
sometimes to the new graves
the weeping aged women come like spring,
offering gifts of new tears to the earth,

and sighs and penitence and signs,
whose tears are orbéd like music
which first fall from the old eyes
anciently to new earth.

*Ah! how compassion comes, like spring,
from far! — the withered root,
the tender kneeling of
the weeping rain.*

But what do old lain bones give back?
what gift like the rain's who binds
the withered root with June? —
what love, what larger flowers than

the mobile, opening rose the dead lips speak?
Ah, how compassion comes like spring, from far:
the need of the winter's withered root,
the tender kneeling of the rain!

(Sometimes, to the new graves
the weeping, aged women come like spring,
from far, and weep the winter's first of rains
from the ancient eye of bitterness.

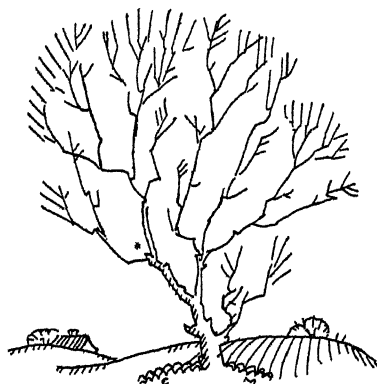
Sometimes, come the aged women,
aged in the ways of weeping, but whose tears
are orbéd like music which first fall
from the old eyes newly to the earth.)

Ah, aged and weeping women, offering
the gift of new tears to the ancient earth
and sighs and penitence and signs:
what do lain bones give back, what gift like rain's

who binds June to the scarred
and bitter root? what gifts like autumn
and the sheaves? what nobler flowers
than the mobile, windy rose opening,

what love do dead lips speak more than the spring
who summons roses from the withered root
and fruits and roses to the mobile wind?
'One, in Love, is risen from the winter's wrack!'

*Ah, how compassion comes like spring,
from far:
the need of the wintered root,
the tender kneeling of the weeping rain.*



JOHN HOLMES

FOUR AND A HALF

THE griefs of a little boy are forever.
His rages are a deathblow given.
In his throat and eyes the loneliness
Of a small boy is a weather-driven
Ache. Joy in a little boy
Is a hand-bell whirled and ringing.
His delight makes more delight.
Growing, greeting, gathering,
A little boy invents amazing words
For the world. The name of never
Is not one. And watch his eyes.
He knows a humming world-forever
Word but cannot say it yet.
The labours of a little boy are all
In carrying something somewhere else,
And back, and reaching to be tall.
His afternoons and evenings are
Thrust forward against sleep as far
As ingenious eagerness can go.
His mornings never end.
Under trees and skies that never bend
He asks to see, and help, and know.
He dabbles noise and water. Tries
The world's worth by running on
Its grass hard. Trusts. And has not
Time to ask why yesterday is gone.

AMANDA BENJAMIN HALL

HARPSICHORD

A HARPSICHORD'S a gentle thing,
Both tender and disquieting,
Like rain-drops patterning a roof—
Each note so plain you cannot miss it.
As though with circumstance and proof
One told some half-forgotten tale
And made the dream-like words explicit.

By such frail notes my heart is rent
As never by the beseeching bow
Of violin, or woodwinds blent . . .

So summer nights I've lain to hark
A tinkling saraband of hail
Along the keyboard of the dark.



ELIZABETH K. CAMPBELL

SKI PATROL

THESE who were young and free, and wore their
 skis
Like winter wings, above the sliding snow,
Who saw the hill ahead, the rocks below,
And faced them with a reckless courage: these
Who fell, and laughed, and climbed again, and sped
Like lightning down the steep, for sheerest joy,
Must now put off adventure, and employ
Caution, endurance, calm; their boyhood shed
Like fading snows, they form the ski patrol.
One sees them at manœuvres, each with pack,
Bayonet, rifle, pouch and haversack,
In close formation, skiing in control . . .
Efficient white-clad ghosts. Pray God that they
Lose not the savour of that happier play!



White cowl and parka, pack, pouch and gun,
No flags flying, or brasses in the sun,
Thus from their woodlands and fair fields of snow
Rockies and Laurentians see their children go.
Thinking of the years gone, the heart might weep.
Yet, lost in war games, haply they keep
Each in his own heart, holy, fine and rare,
Something of bright sun and sweet Canadian air.

EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY

WHEN IT IS OVER

WHEN it is over— for it will be over,
Though we who watched it be gone, watched
it and with it died—
Will there be none the less the yellow melilot, the
white, the high sweet clover,
Close to the dusty, fragrant, hot roadside?
Oh, yes, there will!—
Escaped from fields of fodder, for there must be
fodder still.

Ah, yes, but nothing will escape. . . .

Yet sweet, perhaps, in fields of fodder still.

When it is over— for it will be over—
Will there be none the less, will there be still
In April on the southern slope of an orchard, apple
orchard hill,
Red-and-white buds already fragrant, intent upon
blossoming?—
There will; I know there will.

But for whom will they blossom?—
They will blossom for what, not whom,
I think: — the streakèd bloom
Red-and-white, and the hardy fragrance, strong, all
but visible, almost but not quite in sight,
Long, long before its pretty petals in a May wind
fall,
Will be the finished apple in the eyes of all
beholding it;

I see him well: the human creature studying the
only good
A tree can be— stout wood
For building or for pulp whereon to print the
expedient thing,
Or, if not that, food.
He walks through the apple orchard just now
blossoming,
Dismissing to the necessary, the developing, past
The present beauty and the fragrance enfolding it.



MARIANNE MOORE

THE PAPER NAUTILUS

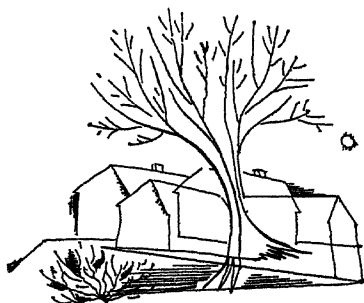
FOR authorities whose hopes
are shaped by mercenaries?
Writers entrapped by
teatime fame and by
commuters' comforts? Not for these
the paper nautilus
constructs her thin glass shell.

Giving her perishable
souvenir of hope, a dull
white outside and smooth-
edged inner surface
glossy as the sea, the watchful
maker of it guards it
day and night; she scarcely

eats until the eggs are hatched.
Buried eight-fold in her eight
arms, for she is in
a sense a devil-
fish, her glass ramshorn-cradled freight
is hid but is not crushed.
As Hercules, bitten

by a crab loyal to the hydra,
was hindered to succeed,
the intensively
watched eggs coming from
the shell, free it when they are freed—
leaving its wasp-nest flaws
of white on white, and close-

laid Ionic chiton-folds
like the lines in the mane of
a Parthenon horse,
round which the arms had
wound themselves as if they knew love
is the only fortress
strong enough to trust to.

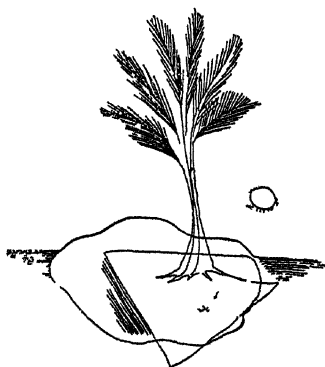


ELLEN TIFFT

FABLE OF LOST SUCCESSION

THIS gun moves a windshield-wiper
Across the sky semi-circle, erases
Parachutes; swift hypodermics of men
Stick the ground with height-heavy shoes.

They are companioned by potential
Generations of children who follow,
Gently as in a Correggio: curled fist-fronds
Fall across the field like snow.



WILLIAM JEFFREY

IN MEMORIAM: F. R. H.

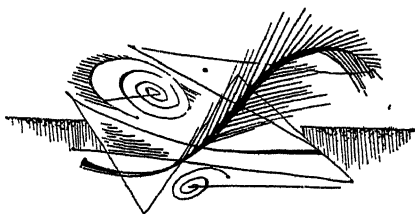
WHEN word went round that you had died,
Fred Higgins,
A wild dissent flashed up in friendly eyes:
That reed of song (it said) cannot be broken,
That lark descend not out of Wicklow skies —
For is he not a strolling slip of Nature
That drinks in heaven's creameries of light,
That gallivants the miles from Meath to Mayo
And tunes the wind that sings on Nephin's height?

But soon the disbelief gave place to sorrow,
Too soon your clay descended to dark clay,
Your toil with song and with a pack of players
Unfinished, and your life at noon of day.
O harsh the ruling of the towering raven;
Surely some tyrant had deserved the stroke.
But we must rail not. Whether sad or merry,
You swung your shoulders to the common yoke.

Now take the earth that reared you. Be its
spirit.

Attend upon its nurseries of dew,
Deck gaily all its hills with brittle silver,
And fold its lakes in wizardries of blue.
Then sometimes at the pleasant sup of evening,
When bowls of western light enfold love's star,
You may be seen at inn doors or by hedges,
Breathed on by Beauty in her jaunting car.

Not yours the clitter-clash of platform'd faction,
Not yours the aping of Homeric song,
But strength in smallness yours, and phrases lovely
As kingfishers above the salmon throng.
And best: you loved the shy thought of the people,
And loved to angle from its sloe-dark wells
The naked speech and lead her home to stanzas
Smooth-hinged on silk and echoing with bells.

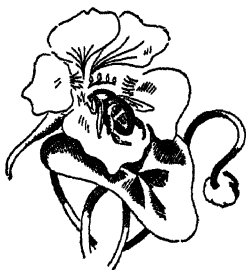


ROBERT FRANCIS

DISTANCE AND PEACE

GO far enough away from anything
In time or space (and space is only time)
And you have peace. The clashes of the stars
Do not disturb the starlit night of earth.
And earthly wars if they are old enough
Make restful reading to a man in bed.

And so with distance that is neither space
Nor time. The grass we walk upon is peaceful.
We can lie down on it and go to sleep,
Being too far above it ever to feel
The toil and competition of the roots,
Their struggle, slow frustration and defeat.



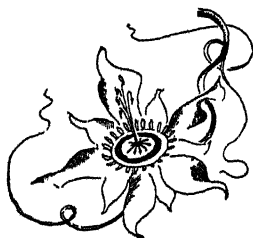
DAVID MORTON

RESOLVEMENT

A WAY you had of coming down the stair,
As many times as I had stood to look,
Had, still, for me, the slow, remembering air
Of something read in a most gracious book—
Read long ago, and long ago forgot,
The tale gone by, the woman never known,—
Till you were there, becoming what was not,
And all sweet names resolving in your own.

Wherefore, if I was silent, for a time,
And my gaze troubled, say that I was one
Who read too many books—of queens and
rhyme . . .

I read too many, still, having never done
With seeing how all queens have learned to wear
Your gowns, your name, your way upon a stair.



J. REDWOOD ANDERSON

A PRAYER IN WAR-TIME

GRANT me, O God, if but a moment's space,
To look again on innocence: the face
Of the still moon that never passion mars,
Depths of dark sky and the cold fire of stars;
Dawn's silent advent, the calm day that folds
The fields and spinneys of the gentle wolds;
The lengthening plains that fade away from sight
Through ever softer veils of paler light;
The chestnut with tiered candles all aglow,
And the green margins where the kingcups grow;
The long hedge-rollers where they foam to may,
And garden-plots unprofitably gay —
Gay with laburnum's unlaborious gold
And short-lived jewels of a worth untold;
Swifts curving to the shadowed eaves, the pair
Of flirting butterflies in the faint air;
The blundering bumble-bee with buzzing wings,
The half-grown sheep . . . and all unhurtful things;
Grant me to look on these, and such as these,
The dear remembrancers of Nature's peace,
That so, with spirit new-baptised, I can
Look undismayed upon the face of man.



LILAH BODINE DRAKE

FANTASY IN A FOREST

[. . . 'And it is well known that the Unicorn by touching the water with his Horn, doth render it free from Poison; and the Creatures of the wild putteth their trust in him, and do Drink thereof.' — *Beastuary* of AMELIUS OF GAULT.]

BETWEEN two unknown trees I stood
Within an Abyssinian wood.
Unseen beside a cold pool's brink,
I saw the beasts come down to drink, —
The elephant, the shy gazelle,
The leopard in his painted fell,
The camel coloured like the sand,
The serpent like a burning brand,
The horse, giraffe, the red baboon
Down from the Mountains of the Moon,
The zebra striped with light and shade
Beside the lion, unafraid.

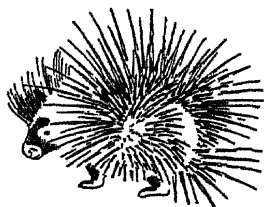
Around the pool they took their stand;
I could have touched them with my hand!
No creature moved, no creature leapt,
But all a curious silence kept,
And nothing in the forest stirred;
They waited as if for a word.

Then stepping lonely from the wild
He came, the white, the undefiled,
With ivory hoof and pearly horn, —
The one, immaculate Unicorn!
Moving serenely to the pond,

Bending no blade nor ferny frond
Beneath the quiet of his tread;
He dipped his proud and lovely head,
And that dark fountain's veil was torn
By the sharp splendour of his horn.

Around the circle went a sigh
As if a breeze were passing by;
And then beside the curving brink
I saw the creatures crouch to drink
Those waters cleansed and strangely blest
By that unhuman exorcist.
They drank together, shy gazelle,
The leopard in his painted fell. . . .

I saw these things the day I stood
Lost in that Abyssinian wood.



EDMUND BLUNDEN

THOUGHTS OF THOMAS HARDY

‘**A**RE you looking for someone, you who come
pattering
Along this empty corridor, dead leaf, to my door?
And before it had struck me that leaves were now
dying?’

‘No, nobody; but the way was open.
The wind blew that way.
There was no other way.
And why your question?’

‘O, I felt I saw someone with forehead bent
downward
At the sound of your coming,
And he in that sound
Looked aware of a vaster voice of decline,
And considering a law of all life.
Yet he lingered, one lovingly regarding
Your particular fate and experience, poor leaf.’

JAMES E. WARREN, JUNR.

INTO WIND . . . AGAINST THE POLAR STAR

SINCE all the summer Europe bled
And winter glares a blackened grief
On autumn wounds, within my head
The world has shrivelled like a leaf.

Maps are insane, the boundaries lie,
And Time and Space are malcontent:
A plane roars up from Germany
And screams and tumbles down to Kent;

The yellow walls of York are lost
Within the Swartzwald's gloom; and Tyre
Is dark on Paris; Goethe's ghost
Returns to haunt green Warwickshire.

And fearing they shall cease to breathe
This wind from Ecuador too soon,
And move no more, who move beneath
A near and Madagascan moon,

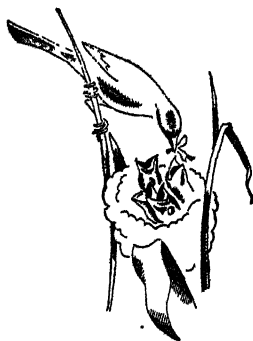
The coward heart, the valiant mind
Must linger weeping where they are,
Nor thrust their bayonets into wind,
Nor fire against the Polar Star.

HERBERT PALMER

HOLIDAY IN SPRING

NOW will my spirit have rest, and my sinews
 swift healing,—
In this cleft of the hills where the moor birds are
 soaring and wheeling,
For I'm salved by the Sun, and go armed with a
 shaft from his quiver;
I exult with the flowers, and flow free as the rain-
 swollen river.

They are drowned, the dark sins; they are dead, the
 harsh phantoms that bound me;—
'Neath this passion of waters and rapture of eyes
 stirring round me.
How my heart beats in tune with these fell-lands,
 for winter forgiven,
All so drenched with the jets of the cloud and the
 sunlight of Heaven!



LEONORA SPEYER

THE WEEPER

WHO is weeping in the apartment above?
I have heard the long-winged seabirds in the
solitary air
(As querulous, as shrill),
But there was sunlight mixed with their crying,
And this is in the night.

This sound is a dark blade
Cutting harsh patterns of grief—
Loud silhouette of a woman weeping.

I hear no words,
But how explicit is this idiom,
This blurred derivative of language.
Here is a tale full-throated,
A dishevelled, noisy sorrow
Coarsely and pitifully told;
Anguish is the common tongue all speak,
And the listener, however reluctant,
Must bear witness.

Through my ceiling,
Through the ceiling of night,
Stretches this high whimpering,
Taut as steel wire,
On which the violent heart careens and teeters—
Crazed tightrope walker
About to fall.

ALUN LEWIS

RAIDERS' DAWN

SOFTLY the civilised
Centuries fall,
Paper on paper,
Peter on Paul.

And lovers waking
From the night—
Eternity's masters,
Slaves of Time—
Recognise only
The drifting white
Fall of small faces
In pits of lime.

Blue necklace left
On a charred chair
Tells that Beauty
Was startled there.



FRED ROSS

COTTON FEVER

'LONG the road on either side,
Cotton's green and two miles wide,
Fields fan out in rows string-straight
An' a boll flings out his fleecy bait
An' grins at me an' seems to say,
'You'll be grabbing at me one day
At six-bits a hundred weight!'

Then the bolls start rustlin', shoutin' in the air,
Just like as if they was callin' off a square:
'Chase that possum, chase that coon,
Chase that cotton-boll roun' the moon.
Crawl down a row an' stan' up straight
On a six-bit whirl fer a hundred weight.
You can live on the lan' till the day you die
'Jus' as long as you leave when the crop's laid by.
So hunker on along an' grabb 'er all aroun' —
Payin' the man for the use of his groun';
Lint's stacked up in a record yield,
Gin's chuck full, so gin 'er in the field.
So pick 'er on down to the end of the gloam,
Then pick up yer sack an' promenade home;
Meet yer baby, pat him on the head;
Feed him on beans an' a piece of corn-bread.
When you go back yonder he'll go freight
At jus' six-bits a hundred weight.'

An' so I mosey down the hill,
Cotton bolls a callin' still:

‘At Long Row’s End, de Boss Man wait,
Nail you up in a wooden crate;
At six-bits a hundred livin’s hard,
By dyin’s dear in a county-yard,
At twenty-five bucks a hundred weight!’



G. ROSTREVOR HAMILTON

THE LIBRARY, GREATHAM

(A Memory of Alice Meynell)

THERE on the hearth a wink of wood-fire glows,
But through the door a breath of wildwood
Spring
Along the litter of the table flows
Silverly to the wall, illumining
Those bookshelves where, no less serene and cool,
Wisdom and song still keep their quiet school.

There would her spirit exquisitely take,
On such a wayward breath, the scent and hue
And stir of wildings everywhere that wake
On lawn and woodland, by their certain clue
Tracing to far horizons the unrest
Of young desire on Earth's maternal breast.

And still her presence is familiar there
And still remote; coming and going feet
And voices bringing in the garden air
Make with her other world a world complete;
While, tender with compassion, her dark eyes
Cease not from intercourse with distant skies.



A. M. SULLIVAN

PSALM BEFORE THE DARK MIRROR

LIFT up your hearts, old men, afraid of the thing
in the darkness,
Lift up your eyes, little sons, who wince at the
splinters of flame,
Open your ears, sad crones, who cringe at the
stomping of thunder,
No gun has dented the sky though the path to the
stars is littered
With broken feathers of hellions that fall from the
groves of the blest;
No bomb has jarred the earth from the tenuous grip
of the sun,
No threat hurled over the hills by the noisy heralds
of iron
Has frightened our nightly neighbours from the
lanes of the zodiac.
Though science has turned slow screws on the
trapped, green fingers of Nature,
And plundered the earth for knuckles of ore and
muscles of gas
Though they shake the grates of the sun for the
dancing atoms of carbon
And shuffle the infinite patterns of thought for a
clue to your being,
The men with the wicks are marching as slaves in
the phalanx of evil.
If the light of wisdom blows out in the windy maze
of our making,
The soul can reach with a word to the shuttered
dormers of heaven,

And scour the smudge in the skies with a publican's
breath of prayer,
Aye, prop the sag in the skies with the rigid faith of
the humble.
Lift up your voice, young men, till the ceiling of
faith shall tremble
Above the orchard of blight where the fruit of the
mind is speckled,
And hurl the windfalls, pitted and wormed at the
feet of malice;
Listen to the ticking heart, to the drumming pulse
of the Master
Who answers that God is portion of Man, and men
are the fractions
Left on the slate where problems argued in blood
never cancel.
As long as children are born, God lives in the veins
of His creature,
And the voice of love from the womb is the ultimate
cry of survival.
The meek shall stalk grotesques that dance by the
embers of anguish,
Holding Golgotha's lamp over earth with its flame
of no shadow.
The long contagion shall fade in the dawn with the
fever of flags
As the pendulum whittles the day in the quiet
torture of tyrants,
For the ice of silence will jewel the sockets long
drained of their anger
And the poisoned word will stick in the empty
gullets of greed.

JOHN GOULD FLETCHER

MEMORIAL FOR 1940

IF we could but silence the gongs in thousands of
cities,
Throttle the sirens, quench the low roar of the
motors,
Muffle the click of the tickers, slow down the
traffic,
Drown out all mechanical noise and suddenly create
silence,
We might come to know at last the meaning of this
world;
Which is as a wave come from the dark, a sudden,
unexpected movement,
Always arrested, never completed, made vital by
half-realised beauty;
And which — though unfinished — flings this final
generation
Like all those lost in the past, drowned in war, to
die, gasping on the shore.

Driven and driven and driven,
Living despite of dying, dying because of living,
Is life's last terrible giving;
Poured out, overflowing, overwhelming, foaming
away on the pavement,
Froth of life, must of death, spilled deep upon the
stones.

We cannot halt it since we are part of it,
We cannot hold it, since it holds us as this offering.
Our doing is part of its dream, our darkness is all of
its triumph.

It is given and it abides, whether we will or no.

But now, since the silence will not rise and surround us,
Leaving us wondering about ourselves, looking each to the other,
Sketching the gesture that will finish with consummation—
We shall not know what meaning was held by that dream.
Not men, but a man; not life but be led; not triumph but brutal obedience—
And laws graven deep in cold blood for the free play of instinct and wisdom.
Since we have neither clear thoughts of ourselves nor the quiet of heaven—
Which is made out of fire and dark even as we, only wider and greater—
No joy shall be ours without horror, no peace without clamour.
With guns, tanks, aeroplanes, ships of iron, lies, bullyings, threats, propaganda,
We shall go forward to a far alien land, and we shall there bury
This light that burned flickeringly, under mountains of dead men, tumuli of faith unremembered;
To burst forth as volcanic fire to the future, and blaze across the world.

BABETTE DEUTSCH

FLIGHT

EVERYTHING is in flight now, trees and men.
Leaves flying, a gale of gold, but the roads
Dull, streaming with fugitives, whose animal stum-
bling

Apes the fright, the monotony of dying.

The trains fleeing, the shiploads in full course.

In the thick of the night the engines, winged,
Over cities that cannot escape. By day the bright
Parachutes tumbling, spilling into the streets
Enemy milkmen, postmen, their packs filled
With mail for the anonymous and doomed.

Everything, everything flees: the impractical body
Flees from oblivion, and the mind from the mirrors
That image its dreadful night, and, too, the heart
From the sound of itself, a muffled motor, whose
meaning

Nobody can guess. Everything is in flight—

Exiles all, without rest, of destination

More ignorant than over the marshes the wild
geese flying

To a happier climate. To what end? Where?

The race goes on although the track is blind.

There is no turning back.

R. C. TREVELYAN

GIANTS

THREE years ago they cut the hazel copsewood
And felled five hundred oaks. Spring comes
again,
And the slopes are aglow with a myriad wood-
anemones,
Primroses, cuckoo-flowers, champions and bluebells.
A few tall, slim beeches and delicate birches
Gently wave their tender leafage in the breeze.
But amidst all this loveliness,
Dark and stark, lopped of their boughs,
Like carcasses of giants slain and stripped,
The huge oak trunks still lie.
None will come to haul them away
Furrowing the flowery soil, shattering the young
copsewood.
With other labours they are busied now,
Slaughtering and destroying and being slaughtered,
Until the noble and ancient race of giants
And all their works have perished.
No time have they to spend on carting timber,
No thought to waste on the earth's beauty.

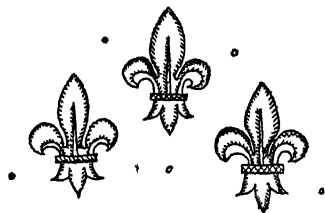
JESSE STUART

SONGS OF SPRING

OH what is life and dream to anyone
Who walks behind his plough and writes a
dream

Under the flavour of the wind and sun
And by the music of a flowing stream!
It's wonderful to hear the bird wings stir
In wind as-blue-as-water overhead;
It's great to hear the tiny insects whirl
On air-light wings of gossamer-glass outspread.
All in a world with me and how they sing!
I want to match their songs but can't express
So many little sounds and dreams of Spring.
I cannot clothe my songs in proper dress
When all I do is stay behind the plough
And watch the mould-board turn the cool loam
over.

I rest my mules and wipe sweat from my brow
And pray that songs of Spring go on forever.



LORD DERWENT

WHICH MUSIC?

(To Mademoiselle Nadia Boulanger)

WHOSE is the music of the Apocalypse?
To which do we meet the old Friend face to face?

To which do we find again those narrow lips
Curving that negative smile, in whatever place—
The Friend of twenty-five years ago, immutable,
Faithful to all and none, grey and inscrutable?

Not, please, the morning gusto of military marches;
Not, please! the sentimental briskness of bugles,
(That we thought we had buried in the former
waves of Flanders

Mud, the brown-grey ocean with hands protruding),
Not, above all, Wagner, music from the navel,
(Even if another race had domed that forehead),
In spite of the Rhine's green majesty chilling
through it,

In spite of the moonlight's foam and the two bodies
Tangled in Love's rough net, in spite of the Dutch-
man's

Blenched and unforgettable brow at the masthead;
For Thor's wearisome hammer is always con-
ducting,

Even through Nuremberg's archest innocence, even
When the eternally profiled swan creaks homeward!

Not, somehow, Sibelius, no, though we render
Thanks for the chain of lakes' profound melan-
cholia,

Thanks for that welcome and staccato gruffness,
And the high cheekbone against the ink of pines.

A surge, then, of revolution along the keyboard?
Sharp cries running from off those bloodless fingers,
(No starlight now, no Mediterranean!)
As the pale-haired Pole withdraws from the frightened window,

Transcribing the boulevard into a red thunder?
Or shall we— ah, more difficult! — call the Hero,
The real Siegfried, though closeted in with silence,
Silence, neglect, and envy, turning, turning
Round in the Viennese attic like rats on treadmills?
Shall we go find him under the oaks at Schönbrunn,
And hear the Austrian sky break into grandeurs,
White sublimities born of anguish, rolling
Their vasty joy's transcendence up to the doorway
Of peace where even the stoniest God must hear
them,
Or if not He, the angels?

As for songs — but where are the mouths to sing
them?
Closed, or dry with the dust of every heartbeat.

No, I think we must have other music, sounds that
have passed somewhere through a long line of
crucibles,
Passed through the cinders of dreadful private
things bitterer to ourselves and dearer,
Something that daily, like the evening primrose,
wells into a sigh prodigious and bleeding,
Something that hardens while complaining, interprets
the doubter in the breastplate, the bedaggered fearer.

Let them call for us, fetch from the mines of wait-
ing the music of Tschaikowsky, of Peter
Tschaikowsky;
Music that went out in Italian slippers and came
back weeping across the snow in boots;
That wanders from limelight to blacknesses un-
avowable, gathering pearls threaded on night-
shade,
That toys with splendour, and then suddenly tears
the heart up and out by its precious roots.

And the dancers float by on their slender calves of
iron, and as they vanish
In one steep spring, their faces throw a look where
trembles an agony all our own,
As if they knew that wood, strings, and metal must
leave mazurka to agility and valse to nostalgia,
Must turn to their destiny, and sweep our misery
and courage into one divine, one intolerable
groan.

There only, out of the steppe, but through colon-
nades of gold, runs the strange Boreas of
comfort;
There only does Hope meet the rags of Despair
with roses and a handshake icy and warm;
Nowhere as in these purple sighs, this magnificence
of pity, this wild honey of desolation,
Shall we find the velvet of our pain, the gauze of
our tears wedded in such necromancy to the
wire of Form.

WALTER DE LA 'MARE

THE STORM

FIRST there were two of us, then there were
three of us,

Then there was one bird more—
Four of us birds—wild white sea birds

Treading the ocean floor;
And the *mind* rose, and the *sea* rose,

To the angry billows' roar,
With one of us—two of us—three of us—four of us
Sea birds on the shore.

Soon there were five of us, soon there were nine
of us,

And, lo! in a trice, sixteen!
And the yeasty surf, curdled over the sands,
The gaunt grey rocks between;
And the tempest raved, and the lightning's fire
Struck blue on the spindrift hoar—
And on four of us—ay, and on four times four of us
Sea birds on the shore.

And our sixteen waxed to thirty-two,
And they to past three score—
A wild white welter of winnowing wings,
And ever more and more;
And the winds lulled and the sea went down,
And the sun streamed out on high,
Gilding the pools and the spume and the spars
'Neath the vast blue deeps of the sky;
And the isles and the bright green headlands shone
As they'd never shone before,
Mountains and valleys of silver cloud
Wherein to swing, sweep, soar
A host of screeching, scolding, scrabbling
Sea birds on the shore—
A snowy, silent, sun-washed drift
Of sea birds on the shore.

ELEANOR WELLS

FOR THE UNDEFEATED

I

IMPERILLED stands the day. Up the bright street
The shadows slowly creep and darken slowly
The sunlit pavement and the yellow leaf.
Windless, the trees are heavy in the air,
The flags hang silent, and the clouds come on
As imperceptibly as time. Dangerous
Are these approaching thunderheads and these
Attendant lightnings, and the night that falls
Unnoticed, terrible, in the heart.

In the city men walk with canes tapping
Like blind beggars, and the open windows
Bring in no light, nor do they throw the lamplight
Into the garden. Talk is in whispers.
We have locked our valuables away,
And forgotten how to spell in our own language.
Dust gathers on the piano and the violin case,
And when we kiss one another it is furtively in
corners.

A bomb fell on the Museum among the Impression-
ists
And the plaster casts of Greek gods.
The librarian burned his books. The post office
Stopped sending letters except for the government,
And the radio stopped playing Brahms.
Night fell, and the doctor broke the test tubes in his
laboratory,
The lawyer couldn't keep up with the legislature,

The Broadway stars went back on the road,
And the rain fell all night upon the city,
And the darkness over it was like mist.

II

Do you remember, Maximilius, the rain
Falling in Gaul, and the legions marching,
Footsore, south to the Alps and Rome?
Three weeks from home, Maximilius,
And the Huns behind us. Have you forgotten
The skins across their shoulders and the horns of
deer

Stuck in their helmets, the great knives,
The war cries shrilling in the blood?
Rain was falling in Appia and the night
Drew down behind us as we fled.

Do you remember, Maximilius, the darkness
Gathering in Rome?

Have you forgotten, Crito,
The killing of brothers and the Thracian hordes
Walking within our temples? Do you remember
Dusk here in Athens among the olive trees,
Dusk in the markets, in the streets, between
The radiant pillars of the Parthenon? Crito,
Remember how the evening came and stole within,
Chilling as hemlock.

Do not forget, Atahualpa,
The Spanish horses prancing in the golden sun,
Nor the slaves bearing ingots for the conqueror.
Remember always in your heart, O King, the vines
Creeping among the caryatids of temples, the crumbling

Of the walls of Cuzco, and the black midnight
That seized you, strangling, here upon your altar.

III

Under our portals now the shadows lengthen,
And our fires turn swift to ashes. Into our keyhole
Seeps the ancient dust. What we have saved of
silver

Tarnishes, and the towers we built to stand forever
Mock us. In our factories men put away their tools,
And we close our books, shut off the radio, eat
A last meal, for night has come.

But if night falls, believe me,
Dawn will return. If we must sleep
Let it be as children, dreaming of tomorrow,
Or as lovers sleep, waking in the night to rise
And go out into the gardens and walk
In darkness among the flowers, not seeing colour
But knowing the rose also is awake.

And many of us, sleepless,
Will sit together through the long night, talking
Of friends remembered and dead poets and the
earth

Warm in the spring between our fingers. Some
Will die in the slow hours of returning day,
Some have already fallen asleep never to wake,
some

Will always sit patiently in the shadows waiting
For yesterday to return.

The darkness claims us.
Let us climb the hill and look for tomorrow.
We will sleep in the meadows where the sun,
Rising, may find us early. We will know,
Even in darkness, that the earth turns beneath us,
And we will dream of our seeds in the earth
And of the harvesting of them, and of the dawn
That will dazzle the treetops when we wake.

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